

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

www.townscountyherald.net • E-mail: tcherald@windstream.net

Indians rally past Lions with 15-unanswered in second half

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Emotions ran high as the Towns County Indians finished out the closing seconds of their 25-21 Region 8-A victory over Lakeview Academy on Friday, Sept. 11, on Jock Horner Field. "That's the team we are," Head Coach Billy Barnhart told his Indians, as the group of young men jumped together in excitement.

The game began favorably for the Indians, as freshman linebacker Cooper Moss recovered a Lions fumble in the first play of the game following the kickoff.

Lakeview would score first just three minutes into the first quarter, but Towns County answered right back, with running backs Dylan Roberts and Kobe Denton taking turns rushing for first downs before Denton ran the ball in for a touchdown on a fourth-and-goal from the Lakeview 2-yard line.

Senior kicker Shea Underwood made good the point after, and the game was tied at 7-7 to start the second quarter.

The Lions decided to make a little trouble for the Indians in their next two drives, however, and heading into the final seconds of the half, Towns County was looking at a 21-7 deficit and unfavorable field position.

Unfavorable, that is, until Underwood got his foot on the ball.

With mere seconds left on the clock, Coach Barnhart decided to try for a field goal – at which point Underwood delivered, showcasing his mental and athletic abilities by kicking a masterful 47-yard 3-pointer, breaking the school's previous record set by him, to close out the second quarter.

After the epic halftime show by the Indian Raider Band, which was followed by a tribute to local police officers, firefighters and EMS for the anniversary of 9/11, the Indians got right back in the game.

During Lakeview's first possession of the second half, Towns County sophomore Andy Chambers caught an interception in Indians territory, starting a 14-play series that went all the



The Indians celebrate their first win of 2015. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

way into the end zone with another touchdown by Denton.

Instead of going for a point after, the Indians tried their hand at a 2-point conversion. Quarterback Russell Cox, thanks to tremendous blocking from the offensive line, cruised in past Lion defenders for the extra points, bringing the score to 18-21 at the start of the fourth quarter.

The Lions would punt away their next two possessions, setting the Indians up with a first-and-10 on their own 32-yard line with only 2:52 left in the game.

A field goal would tie the game, which was pretty much assured as long as they could get Underwood to the middle of the field, but as time ran down, the Indians found themselves with less than two minutes on the clock facing a third-and-6 from their own 36-yard line.

Then, something magical happened – Denton rushed into coverage, but instead of going down, he turned and fended off two tackles to break free in a mad 64-yard dash for the Lions end zone.

Even though he'd played hard all game long, scoring the team's other two touchdowns and defending against a tough Lions offense, Denton managed to outrun every man on his tail to score what ended up being the game-winning touchdown.

After Underwood kicked the point after attempt, the game came to its final score of 25-21. The Lions possessed the ball

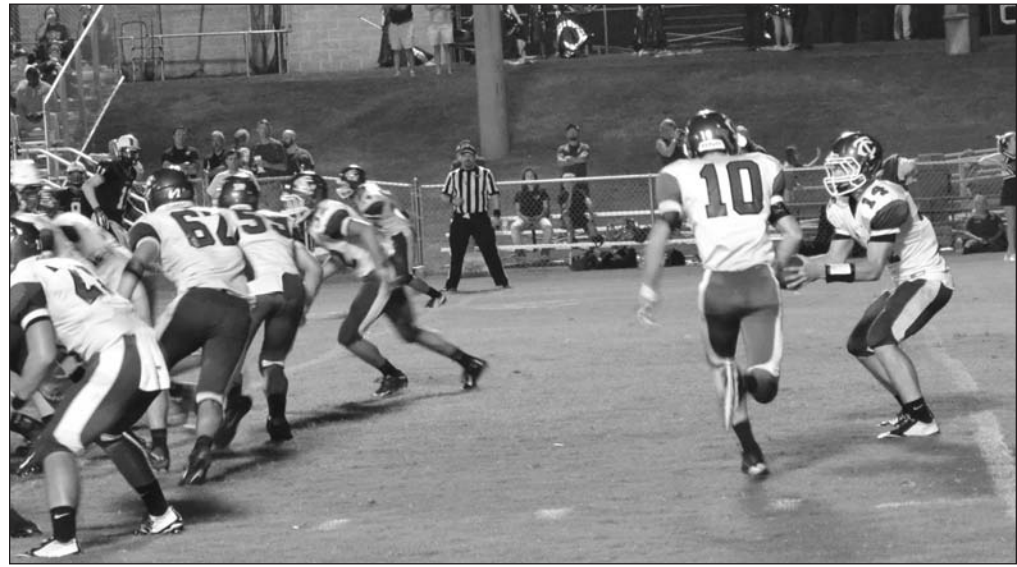
one more time, only to turn it over on downs, and Towns County won the game having scored 15 unanswered points in the second half.

"I am so proud of them," said Coach Barnhart. "They did a great job tonight. I've been telling them really for the last year and a half how they just continue to fight and continue to work hard, and that's what they did tonight. We talked in pregame about perseverance, and that's what they did, they persevered tonight, continued to come out and fight and fight."

"We just came out in the second half, shut them out defensively – the defense did a great job, and we got our offense finally rolling, and I just tell you, I can't say enough about Kobe Denton on that last run. That's just a great effort, great run. We had some good blocking all night long – I don't know how good it was on that play, but he made something out of nothing, and he just did a great job."

For Coach Barnhart, the biggest thing about the win over Lakeview is not that it's a great way to start region play – which it is – but that his Indians never gave up on themselves or their teammates, no matter the scoreboard at times.

"I'm proud of these guys, and just proud of the way they continue to come out and believe and work hard. I just can't say enough about them and how proud I am of them," said Coach Barnhart. "It's all them – this win is all theirs, it's all them,



Towns County QB Russell Cox (14) fakes the hand off and keeps it himself. Photo/Lowell Nicholson and they did a great job."

Both offensively and defensively, the Indians proved that they have hearts, minds, bodies and souls for the game of football, and more importantly, for each other.

All in all, the Indians played four remarkable quarters, having come up with a huge field goal, three terrific touchdowns, a 2-point conversion, two point after attempts, interceptions, and progress-stopping blocks and tackles.

"It was just a great win, all three phases of the game – offense, defense and special teams just did a great job, and I can't tell you how proud I am of them, and I'm so happy for these guys," said Coach Barnhart. "They deserve it."

The Indians had red zone troubles during their first two games of the season, in the scrimmage against Hayesville, NC, and the season-opener against Union County. Facing Lakeview, however, those troubles seemed to disappear altogether.

"Yesterday we talked about it at the end of practice," said Coach Barnhart. "We walked down to the red zone, said this is where we've been getting. Then we walked down into the end zone and said, this is where we want to be tomorrow night. And we found it tonight, so I think that maybe worked for us yesterday, and maybe we'll do that every Thursday."

Coach Barnhart credits his coaching staff with helping him make adjustments to get the ball across the line and into the



Towns County linebacker Nick Shook (62) fends off a host of Lions to bring the ball carrier to the turf for one of his 17 tackles on the night. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

end zone. Denton led the Indians with 160 yards rushing and three scores on 17 carries. Roberts gained 84 yards, with Chambers adding 33, and Cox finishing with 30.

Nick Shook finished with 17 tackles on the night. Bailey Chastain and Daulton Rogers each recording a dozen take downs.

Looking forward to this Friday, Sept. 18, for the Indians' game at Hebron Christian Academy at 7:30 p.m., the entire staff plans to work every bit as hard to pull out another win.

"In this region, all games are tough. That's a good football

team we just beat," said Coach Barnhart of Lakeview Academy. "They're a lot better than last year, much improved, and that's a good football team we beat. We're 1-0 in the region now, and we've got something to build on and continue to work on right here, and hopefully give us a springboard into the rest of our region schedule."

Following the game, sophomore Luke Woody, who held the Lions at bay all night, rushed Coach Barnhart from behind with the water cooler, showering him in a celebratory ice bath to the cheers of his teammates.

Youth football goes down to the wire in all four games on Saturday

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

At Jackson County against the Smoky Mountain Mustangs, all four teams of the Towns County Youth Football League fell just short of total victory on Saturday, Sept. 12.

Each team played with plenty of heart, reflected in the scores of each game.

The Pee Wee Indians lost 36-26, the Termitte Indians lost 8-6, the Mite Indians lost 16-8 and the Midget Indians lost 42-40 – those are four games with score differences of fewer than two touchdowns at most, and one 2-point conversion at least.

"Those were all ballgames – I mean, they all were, all day," said TCYFL Director Jimmy Smith. "We just came up short. We played hard. All four teams played great, and it just seemed like if there was a fumble, we just couldn't get it. The ball would bounce right in front of us and they'd pick it back up. We didn't seem to get any breaks. We played very competitively, and I'm proud of all the boys – nobody quit and all of them played hard."

On the Pee Wee team, Tucker Engert scored three touchdowns with 210 rushing yards and 10 tackles; Ryleand Shook tackled five Mustangs with one for a loss; Braydon Hedden had four tackles and one for loss; Jaykob Goodwin also had four tackles, with five yards rushing; Seth Rogers tackled two players; Aiden Reynolds scored a touchdown, rushed 154 yards and had 10 tackles; Max Salazar had two tackles; and Ayden Bradley, Tucker Wheeler and Maddox Baltzell all joined in on a tackle.

For their part, the Termites put up a tremendous defensive showing, but in the end, neither team could muster a huge offense.

"Very proud of our boys," said Termites Head Coach Shane Haney. "They showed a lot of heart and fight to the last second. I couldn't ask for a better group of kids. Grayson Tallent, Lane Haney, Jacob Nicholson, Ryan Parker, Wyatt Woody and Mason Mitchell rotated along our front defensive line and did a superb job in the trenches. They kept us in the game and kept our backers free to

make tackles."

Director Smith said that the Mites played better on defense against the Mustangs than they have all year, and Head Coach Joseph Goble was excited to see his Indians improving.

"It was a great day for football," said Coach Goble. "We have shown a lot of improvement offensively and defensively. After a few offensive modifications, we moved the ball and Jensen Goble got a touchdown, with Griffin Young getting the 2-point conversion."

"On defense, Landon Eller and Christian Wade dominated, getting in the backfield. We are playing as a team and we are improving every game. We might be younger compared to the other teams, but we are fighting harder and harder each game. It was an awesome game to watch and coach."

The Towns County Midgets proved themselves offensive and defensive powerhouses.

Hayden McClure scored three touchdowns, two rushing and one receiving, with 150 rushing yards and 60 yards receiving.

Collin Crowder rushed for 200 yards and a touchdown, and received for 80 yards and a touchdown.

Kyle Oakes at quarterback passed for 270 yards, completing for two touchdowns, and he rushed for a touchdown.

On the defense, Reece Hampton and Crowder had eight tackles apiece, while AJ Miles made six tackles.

"I'd like to thank the parents for letting their kids come out and play," said Director Smith. "We had a pretty good crowd out there for as far away as it was. I hope we pack the house this weekend at home, so maybe everybody will come out, and maybe teams will be better this week for us. We're trying – none of the kids are laying down. They're all playing hard."

Towns County Youth Football players square off at home this Saturday, Sept. 19, against the Swain County Maroon Devils. Swain County doesn't have a Pee Wee team, so the Pee Wee Indians will have a bye week.

For those who would love to come out and support the youth of Towns County, first game kickoff will be at 11 a.m. Saturday in Frank McClure Memorial Stadium.

Towns County Cross Country begins its title defense at Union

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County High School Cross Country boys and girls teams officially kicked off their season in races at Meeks Park in Blairsville on Thursday, Aug. 27.

For the Indians, Tyler Grimsley came in 23rd with a time of 20:12, Marshall Ledford came in 25th with a time of 20:25, Corbin Henderson came in 36th with a time of 21:16, Jeremy Lovell came in 52nd with a time of 23:02 and Gavin Langelier came in 57th with a time of 23:29.

Lady Indian Hannah Whitehead came in fifth with a time of 21:56, followed by teammates Taylor Cornett in seventh with a time of 22:44, Taralee Arrowood in 14th with a time of 24:05, Jasmine Miranda in 22nd with a time of 26:07 and Lydia Moss in 23rd with a time of 26:17.

The two teams are coming off of stellar 2014-2015 season performances, as the girls were State Champions for the third year running, and the boys finished Runners Up for the first time in Towns County High School history.

"We graduated only one

boy and one girl, so there is strength with the experience of returning veterans," said Cross Country Coach Jeannie Ledford. "We have gained runners that have proved to be major assets to the depth of a solid team. We have big numbers this year, 29 in total."

"They are training, conditioning and working very hard in humble, determined pursuit of another chance at the State Championship for both teams. The teams have good camaraderie, strong spirit and are very goal driven. We do have pre-existing injuries and illnesses that have been a hurdle."

Every year, Coach Ledford repeats the same piece of wisdom that carries her Indians and Lady Indians through each season.

"It's not how you start; it's how you finish," said Coach Ledford. "We are embracing the opportunity to defend the girls title, and on the boys side, they are ready to capture one of their own. After being Runner-Up last year, it added fuel to the existing fire."

Senior captains for the 2015-2016 season are Samantha Quijada, Miranda Queen, Gavin Langelier, Thomas Mitchell, Austin Watson and Kevin Reardon.

Other teams that competed in the race at Meeks Park were Union County, Fannin



Towns County Cross Country Manager Kyra Tallent contributed to this report.

McCay Lodge Bass Tournament

The McCay Lodge Bass Tournament will be held on Saturday, September 26th at Lake Chatuge, Ledford Chapel Ramp, beginning at 7 a.m. until 4 p.m. 100% guaranteed based on 40 boat field. Entry fee is \$80 per boat.

First Place - \$1,000; Second Place - \$700; Third Place - \$500; Fourth Place - \$300; and Fifth Place - \$100. Big Fish - \$200 donated by Blue Ridge Insurance and Smallest Fish - Victory Custom Road donated by David Helton.

This is a fund raising project for the Masonic lodges and McCay Lodge. With the proceeds from this tournament, we help support the children's home and other projects.

Tri-County Junior Golf Association Fall Tour



Members of the Tri-County Junior Golf Association

The Tri-County Junior Golf Association is proud to once again be holding the "Jacky Jones Fall Tour." The Tour is a series of 5 junior golf tournaments held throughout western North Carolina and Northeast Georgia. This is the 13th year of the Fall Tour.

The first tournament was

held at Chatuge Shores Golf Course on August 27, with over 55 kids from surrounding counties participating. The tournament was hosted by Signs Fast of Hayesville, NC.

The second tournament was held at Butternut Creek Golf Course on September 3 and was hosted by N. Kenneth Daniel, P.C.

Participants range in age from as young as 6 to as old as 18 - and come from counties across the area: Towns, Union, White, Fannin, Clay and Cherokee. Several of the past participants in the Tri-County Junior Golf program have gone on to college careers.